Early Indian Poetry in Queen’s Language

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Introduction:
The history of Indian English literature played a vital role in the enrichment of the history of world literature. Though Indian English Literature is not so much older, it took very high place in global context especially poetry. Indian English poetry is the oldest and most mature form of Indian literature. The history of Indian English poetry passed through many phases of time and development. The effects of social milieu, political atmosphere, and historical background of India have been seen in Indian poetry. The year 1947 draws a line which divides Indian English Poetry into Pre-Independence Indian English Poetry and Post-Independence Indian English Poetry. Indian English Poetry begins with Henry Louis Vivian Derozio who got his poetic collection, titled, Poems published from Baptist Mission Press, Kolkata in 1827. Since then, it has been flowing continuously though its beginning is derivative and imitative. With the passage of time, it gets its own Indian rhythm and develops an idiom which is wholly Indian in spirit. Let us look up the history of the Indian poetry in English.

First Phase of the Poetry:
Before the time of the first phase, there were many poets and poetry which has been completely ignored, even forgotten. Many critical works tried to explore that forgotten works and poets. The first phase of Indian poetry was the period of literary renaissance in India. Derozio's poems, Kasiprasad Ghose's The Shair or Minstrel and other poems, Michael Madhusudan Dutt's The Captive Lady, Manmohan Ghose's Love Songs and Elegies are a testimony to the creative upsurge occasioned by the romantic spirit kindled by the literary renaissance. Toru Dutt alone among these romantic poets of the first phase puts an emphasis on India and her heritage by putting into verse a large number of Indian legends. The romantic Toru Dutt is also a predecessor in respect to the use of the tree in verse as demonstrated by "Our Casuarina Tree", a predecessor in respect of childhood memories recalled with nostalgia or regret. Toru dutt, sarojini Naidu,
Derozio, Tagore, Aurobindo and many other early poets described the spiritual quality of Indian culture. Multiculturalism is the most attractive quality of Indian culture which beautifully evaluated by these early poets. Indian poetry in English began in Bengal, the province in which the British first gained a stronghold. In addition, his poetry was largely an urban phenomenon centered in Calcutta. In fact, for the first fifty years, it was confined entirely to a few Bengali families who were residents of the city. Then, gradually it moved to other urban centers such as Madras and Bombay; even today, Indian poetry in English remains largely urban. Moreover, because English was an elite language in India, Indian poets in English came from the upper classes and castes. When Indians first began to write poetry, it was not distinguished from that of the British in India, or Anglo-Indians as they were called. Indeed, because India was a part of the British Empire, Indian poets in English were not given a separate national identity; their early efforts were considered tributary to the mainstream of English Literature.

**Second Phase of the Poetry:**

Poetry written in the colonial period with a view to establish Indian identity by the Indian poets was an explosion or rather outburst of emotions: the nationalistic, philosophical, spiritual or mystical emotions. The appeal was to the heart of the readers. The poetry of Toru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Sarojini Naidu could not be romantic since they had to express the ethos of the age. They were not merely imitating the English romantics, Victorians and Decadents blindly. Their poetry was the best voice of the contemporary Indian time-spirit. It would be fair to say that Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu constitute a kind of watershed between the first two phases, in that they share their predecessor’s individual nostalgia as well as their successor's sense of crisis and quest for identity. The poets of the second phase, still romantic in spirit were Sarojini Naidu, Tagore, Aurobindo Ghose and Harindranth Chattopadhyaya. The poetic output of these poets was prolific. Romanticism of these Indian poets was fraught with nationalism, spirituality and mysticism. It was therefore different from English romanticism. Indian romanticism widened the poet's vision. While Aurobindo's was the search for the Divine in Man and Tagore's was the quest for the Beautiful in Man and Nature. Both were philosopher poets. Sarojini Naidu's romantic muse underscored the charm and splendor of traditional Indian life and Indian scene. She had a fine ear for verbal melody as she was influenced not only by English poetry but also by the Persian and Urdu poetry. She excelled in lyricism. She was a true nightingale of India.
Third Phase of the Poetry:

Third phase of the history of poetry generally covers the period of after independence. It is also called the modern period or post-modern poetry. The famous post-independent poets are Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes, P. Lal, Adil Jussawalla, A. K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarthy, Gieve Patel, Arvind Mehrotra, Pritish Nandy, Kamala Das, K. N. Daruwalla, Shiv Kumar, Jayanta Mahapatra, Dilip Chitre, Saleem Peerdina, Santan Rodrigues, Eunice De Souza, Silgardo, Meena Alexander, Agha Shahid Ali, Vikram Seth, Manohar Shetty etc. this period became famous for its experimental attitude and modern trends in poetry. The poets of this phase are cosmopolitan poets. The ethos of the post-independence phase of Indian English literature is radically different from the first two phases. Its relation to the first two phases is that of the modern age in English literature to Victorianism. When the question of political independence was resolved in 1947 with the partition of India, the tensions of the Indian psyche suddenly relaxed. The post - independence era of hope and aspiration was replaced by an era of questioning and ironic exposure. The national identity achieved after independence gave Indian writers a new confidence to be the critic of the present, the past and of them. In this new spirit and confidence the Indian poets found themselves in line with Modern English and American poets. So once again there was borrowing up to some extent as in the first two phases of Indian poetry. While the pre - 1947 poets borrowed from the romantics, Victorians and "new" Romantics of the decadent period, the post - 1947 poets borrowed from the modernist poets like Yeats, Eliot, Pound and Auden. It is ironical that the word "romantic" should become a veritable red tag to the post- independence poets. If the word "romantic" is a red tag, the word "mystical" drives them to a fury. Adil Jussawalla, for example, finds Sri Aurbindo's Savitri "unwinding like an interminable sari". Parthasarthy declares that "Savitri fails as a poem because Ghose's talent and resourcefulness in the use of English was limited." About Toru Dutt, Parthasarthy says, "Toru Dutt's poems mean little to us because our idea of poetry has changed since her day." If the succeeding generation denigrates the preceding generation so vehemently, all past poetry - Valmiki, Homer, Dante, Kalidas, Shakespeare, Goethe, Whitman - would become irrelevant. At the same time, no poet can escape the present also because he is in it and of it. The best that the poet can do is to relate the immediate present to the living past and if possible to a future that is in the process of becoming. The later phase of Indian English poetry is of the modern and postmodern phase. The modern or experimental Indian English poetry is part of the process of modernization which includes urbanization, industrialization, mobility, independence, social change, increased communication (in the form of films, television, radio, journals and newspapers) national and international transportation
networks, mass education and the resulting paradox that as an independent culture emerges, it also participates in the international, modern usually westernized world.

Contemporary Indian English poetry is the expression of certain attitudes and values believed in by certain sections of today's Indian society, wholly urban, middle class. The poets are realistic and intellectually critical in the expression of their individualized experience. The poets go in for precision at all levels. The poems are not didactic but thought provoking as they fall back on psychological problems presented in a psychoanalytical manner. So most of the poems do not strive for resolution of themes or conclusive stance. Modern Indian poems are by the poet turned psychologist, psychoanalyst, existentialist, surrealist etc. They are purely an expression of thoughts felt. There is a lot of experimentation in the modern Indian poetry with a view to achieving modernity. Rhyme and stanzaic forms were replaced by free verse. Verbal melody came to be evoked through the use of alliterative and assonant words. The tone was one of intellectualized irony and sarcasm. The stance of the poets was one of complete detachment and objectivity. The other innovation of the modern Indian poets is the use of symbolism. The poets use modern techniques used by the film industry and advertising industry, besides the stream of consciousness and free association of ideas. There is much "word hunting" and "image-hunting" which reflects the medium of consciousness on the part of the poet. The Indian poets therefore borrow words from their regional languages. To be Indian, poets have to be rooted somewhere in India - geographically, historically, socially or psychologically.

Major Indian English Poets in India:

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, (1809-1831) is generally credited as being the first Indian poet in English. He was born in Calcutta and especially remarkable because he was Christian and reared among Eurasians who were closer to the British. Infact, many of his Hindu Bengali contemporaries too strove to identify them with the latter. Derozio's love for India is revealed in several of his poems. He had an extraordinary career as a journalist, teacher, poet and a leading intellectual of his day. In poems like "The Harp of India and "My country! In thy day of glory past", he strikes a nationalistic note, trying to revive in English a moribund indigenous tradition of poetry. His long poem, "The Fakeer of Jungheera" is an interesting attempt to fuse the Byronic romance with social criticism of contemporary Indian mores. He died before he could fulfill the great promise that he showed as a poet and intellectual. Despite this he is counted among the major Indian poets in English for both historical and artistic reasons.
Toru Dutt is the first significant poet who exploits the legends in order to recommend virtues like devotion to duty, feeling of sacrifice and spirit of selflessness that make Indian roots deep and life worth-living. She surprises the West when she introduces India's racial consciousness through her legends which convey Indian traditions and values with their inner strength. Sarojini Naidu is not deep and philosophical because she never makes her voyage within. But, she honestly colors the pages of her poems with the various Indian colors that she sees. Her poetry strikes the reader with charms and colours. She never stirs the soul but colors the Indian landscape with Indian people and things like the Indian weavers, palanquin bearers, corn-grinders, wandering beggars and wandering singers, snake-charmers, bangle-sellers, village-folks singing the hymns, the purdah nashin, maidens, widows, old women, priests, festivals, Indian customs and traditions, spiritual heritage in meditation and chanting the mantras, bonds of Hindu and Muslim Unity, patriots, historical places, historical people, birds, flowers, rivers, sky and the like. She is a poet of love, beauty and romantic fervors. In her folk songs, she reveals devotion to Krishna through Radha and village maidens. Her songs emit the fragrance of Indian soil and her love for her country.

The case of Kamala Das is different from that of Toru Dutt or Sarojini Naidu. She neither exploits the legends nor simply paints the beauty of her surroundings. She pens the lived experiences of her life and stirs the readers within while making them think of woman as a person and not merely a possession. A woman is not meant to be consumed and, so, she searches for her identity in the male dominated world. She oscillates between love and lust and, finally, takes shelter in the love of Ghasnhyam. She moves from physical to spiritual and becomes a modern Mira or Radha who sees her Krishna everywhere. In ancient times woman was respected as a person and allowed to do what she liked. Kamala Das fights for woman in order to make the world realize that they are persons and have their own space.

Manmohan Ghose, (1869 - 1924) went to win an open scholarship to attend Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1887. There he befriended Stephen Phillips and Lawrence Binyon. While at Oxford, Manmohan's poems appeared in Primavera (1890) along with those of three other poets. Oscar Wilde reviewing the book in the 'Pall Mall Gazette' commented favorably on Manmohan's poetry. During his lifetime just one collection of his poems, Love Songs and Elegies, was published in London by Elkin Mathews in the Shilling Garland series in 1898. He remained a dedicated poet and wrote a number of longer, more ambitious works including 'Perseus', 'the Gorgon Slayer', 'Nala and Damayanti', 'Orphic Mysteries', 'Immortal Eve' and 'Adam Alarmed in Paradise'.

Sri Aurobindo, (1872 - 1950) probably has the best claim to be regarded as the greatest Indian poet in English. He wrote a vast body of verse in almost every available genre during his poetic career of over fifty - five years. He wrote lyrics, sonnets, long narrative poems, dramatic poetry and epics. He was well - versed in both European and Indian classics, proving his command over them in his brilliant translations. He was also one of India's most significant philosophers and critics in recent times, thereby originating a new, and evolutionist Yoga philosophy. He founded an original school of thought and religious sect as the head of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. He used his original English poetry equally with prose as the vehicle of his ideas. Aurobindo is the most discussed of the Indian poets in English; there are more books and articles on his epic of over 24,000 lines, Savitri.

Indian poetry in English of this period can also claim Rabindranath Tagore (1861 - 1941) as one of its own. Though strictly speaking, Tagore wrote only one poem, 'The Child' (1931), in English, his own English renderings of his famous poem, Gitanjali (1912) won him the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 and world - wide renown. After that, Tagore continued to "translate" several of his works into English, deviating considerably from the Bengali in the process. Tagore bestrides the world of Indian culture like a colossus. Poet, dramatist, novelist, short - story writer, critic, musician, educationist and savant, he was one of the most remarkable figures in the recent history of India, besides being almost certainly the greatest Indian poet of the century. We find a chiseled perfection to his work. His poems are strikingly finished, rich in texture and profound in thought. He celebrated and affirmed his pleasure in the world of the senses. He saw the world as imbued with the glory of God.

Nissim Ezekiel, the first forceful voice of the post-Independence era reveals his sense of belongingness to Bombay, the microcosm of India and becomes a singer of its longings which he articulates through sex-landscape with all the realistic colours. He also shows how the Western effect has created a decline in the human values of the Indian people who have forgotten the mantras of tolerance, non-violence and cosmopolitanism. His poetry which creates a therapeutic effect on the reader is universal in nature. In his very Indian poems, he sketches the realistic picture of Indians and their way of life. He also seems to be offering some practical and philosophic tips which are certainly valuable pieces for leading a purposeful life. Keki N. Daruwalla voices his first hand experiences which he had while handling a particular situation in his career of a police officer. In his later poems, he does not paint the landscape of his poetry with blood, curfew and corruption but becomes mature enough to ponder over life and death. The
Shiv K. Kumar also imbues Indian culture but criticizes its outdated superstitions and orthodox rituals in religion through the device of irony, contrast and paradox. He never digests the idea why blood is shed in the name of sacrifice to the Goddess Kali. He wonders why people go to the Ganga for their outward purification without taking inner purification into consideration. He does not believe in suppressing desires but emphasizes for their sublimation. He values intuitions over reasons and speaks against sex merely for gratification. He considers sex as the holy flame which illumines the way to the divine within.

Jayanta Mahapatra searches for his roots in myths, legends and history of Orissa and makes an inward journey into the rich cultural past through the cultural racial memory. He presents the miserable condition of woman, becomes the voice of the people who suffered much in Bhopal gas tragedy, feels the burns as a result of terrorism, and cries out of despair because of alienation and rootlessness of the modern man. He speaks against the rituals and superstitions; and reveals the hypocrisy and the irreligious attitude of the religious people.

Arun Kolatkar is culturally conscious but he, unhesitatingly, reveals the masks of rituals, superstitions and irreligiousness worn in the name of being religious in Jejuri at micro level and in India at macro level. He shocks the readers when he brings out the truth behind the curtain. But, to tag him that he is against religion is an injustice to him. He shows what one fails to see. He becomes a poet of subalterns in Kala Ghoda Poems by painting the way of life they lead. He deciphers Sarpa Satra from the point of view of the snake man and makes it contemporary relevant by weaving its fabric with allegory, narration and myth though sometimes he comes down to the level of profanity or obscenity which generally either shocks the reader or makes him wonder at his candidness.

R. Parthasarathy follows the steps of Ramanujan and looks into his past and the Tamil culture in order to find out his cultural roots. He finds himself in dilemma when he sees that he cannot leave English while Tamil sensibility cannot leave him. In Rough Passage, he makes a cultural journey which begins right from ‘Exile’ and ends with ‘Homecoming’ via ‘Trial’. As he feels much grieved to see the decline of Tamil culture, he longs for its restoration to its former self.

Niranjan Mohanty is a poet of Indian ethos and sensibility. He is also against the outdated values and rituals followed in the name of religion. He loves Jagannatha culture and promotes its
ideals which include harmony, religious tolerance, humbleness, service to humanity, feeling of sacrifice and the faith that the true pleasure lies in divine life, not in material pursuits. He is a poet who has imbued Ezekiel and Ramanujan on one hand and Kolatkar and Jayanta Mahapatra on the other.

**Harindranath Chattopadhyaya** (1898 - 1989), brother of Sarojini Naidu showed great promise in his first collection, *The Feast of Youth* (1918). Both Tagore and Aurobindo were impressed by his talent; the latter wrote a glowing review of the book, while the former hailed him as his successor. His output is varied in theme, ranging from Aurobindonian idealism to Marxist materialism. He usually writes rhymed and metric verse.

**Conclusion:**

The third phase of the history of Indian poetry or the the history of Indian poetry in English in post-independent period is totally different from Pre-independent period. Most of the early poetry was inspired by the Indian freedom struggle and the western romantics. Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose and the Dutt family wrote romantic poetry highlighting the Indian culture and ethos. The Indian poetry in English passed through its infant age to the mature period by the time and our Indian poets helped her to look beautiful and strong throughout the process. Now it has grown up. Its increasing number of poets proves that it has been a successful medium of expression. In present time, we can find the various kind of themes and style in its writing. Variety of words can be seen in Indian poetry in English. Modern poets become more advanced and open minded in their subject matters. They do not hesitate to choose any controversial subject or idea to express their emotions life any other writer or critic. Indirectly, the credit goes to early poets of the history because they allowed themselves to speak freely and boldly by the medium of poetry. Their effort made the poetry not just the means of singing or entertainment or the place where the poet uses his artistic talent but they made the poetry the medium of expression.

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